

ST. PATRICK'S DAY MINI-PLANNER
SAMPLE LETTER TO EDITOR
566 words

Dear Editor:

St. Patrick's Day has become a big night out for many Americans, particularly among young adults. But it is also a very dangerous night out due to impaired drivers.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 32 percent of all traffic fatalities on the nation's highways around St. Patrick's Day in 2003 were the result of impaired drivers with blood alcohol content levels of 0.08 percent and above.

That's why **[Local Leader /Organization]** is joining with other federal, state and local highway safety and law enforcement officials across the nation to remind all of those who plan on using alcohol during St. Patrick's Day festivities this year to act responsibly by designating their sober drivers before the parties begin.

Whether you are just meeting a few friends after work at the corner pub or attending the big local parade or party, if you plan on using alcohol, never drive while impaired – and never let your friends drive if you think they are impaired.

Designating a sober driver before the local celebration begins and making sure friends don't drive drunk are just two of several, simple steps to help avoid a tragic crash or an arrest for impaired driving.

If you are attending a St. Patrick's Day celebration and plan on using alcohol, remember to:

- Designate your sober driver before the party begins and give that person your car keys;
- Don't starve yourself before or during the party. Enjoy the food as well as the drink;
- Avoid drinking too much alcohol too fast. Pace yourself – eat, take breaks, alternate with non-alcoholic drinks;

- If impaired, don't even think about getting behind the wheel. Ask a sober friend for a ride home; call a cab, friend or family member to come and get you, call your local sober rides program, use mass transit, or stay where you are and sleep it off until you are sober;
- And remember, *Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk*. Take the keys and never let a friend leave your sight if you think they are about to drive while impaired.

If you are hosting a St. Patrick's Day party:

- Serve lots of food – particularly high-protein dishes – and be sure to include lots of non-alcoholic beverages, desserts and coffee;
- Be sure all of your guests designate their drivers in advance, or help arrange ride-sharing with sober drivers; and
- Keep the numbers for local cab companies handy, and take the keys away from anyone who is thinking of driving while impaired.

Impaired driving is one of America's deadliest problems. Nationally, more than 17,000 people died in alcohol-related highway crashes during 2003. Every 30 minutes, nearly 50 times a day, someone in America dies in an alcohol-related crash. Hundreds of thousands more are injured each year. According to NHTSA, about three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives.

Driving impaired or riding with someone who is impaired is simply not worth the risk because the consequences are serious and real. Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for driving while impaired can be really significant.

Please remember. Don't test your luck this St. Patrick's Day. Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk. Designate your sober driver in advance – before the festivities begin.

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